



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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TWO CHARGED CRIMINALLY IN ICE HUMAN SMUGGLING CASE

FT. PIERCE, FL –Two Mexican nationals allegedly involved in human smuggling were criminally charged in federal court Monday following a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigation.

Ricardo Jose Contreras, 34 and Regino Sanchez, 25 both citizens of Mexico, were charged here in U.S. District Court for transporting illegal aliens within the United States for profit, in violation of Title 8, United States Code, Sections 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (B)(i); and conspiring to transport illegal aliens within the United States for profit, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2.

According to the criminal complaint, Contreras and Sanchez were contracted to transport smuggled aliens and collect the fees demanded by the smuggling networks. As part of the criminal scheme, the two defendants would pick up the aliens at safe house in Phoenix, Arizona and transverse the Southern United States and drop off the aliens along the way and collect smuggling fees. This last stop they made in Florida, turned out to be their last. The last illegal immigrant was an 18-year old female, referred to as S.M. in the criminal complaint.

S.M.'s father had paid over \$2,500 to other individuals to have her smuggled into the United States. He was to pay the remaining balance of \$2,500, when she was delivered to him. When the father met with the defendants and his daughter at a K-Mart in Lantana, he did not have the full payment and asked for a short period of time to go to a bank to get money. The defendants refused and fled with his daughter. Contreras and Sanchez were later arrested by the Lantana Police Department.

"We will continue our investigative efforts to identify and neutralize these criminal enterprises that show a blatant disregard for human life," said Jesus Torres, special agent-in-charge for ICE in Miami. "Those who seek to profit at the expense of others will be held accountable for their actions."

"Alien smugglers jeopardize the lives of foreigners who simply yearn for a better life," said U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida Marcos Jiménez. "The defendants, as charged, profited from the transportation of illegal aliens across the country, and abducted the young alien when her family was unable to complete payment. Fortunately, because of the prompt response of our law enforcement partners, the young woman was rescued."

If convicted on the substantive charge of transporting aliens within the United States for profit, the defendants face a statutory maximum term of imprisonment of 10-years. If convicted on the conspiracy charge, the defendants face a statutory maximum term of imprisonment of five-years.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities